

I. Project Purpose: Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises

a. A Problem of Access

Immigrants and refugees with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) present both valued diversity and difficult challenges for cities across America. Lincoln, Nebraska, is no different. In Lincoln's public school system, children speak 47 languages—a reflection of the vibrancy of a Midwestern city of 225,000 people. Refugees are also shaping our community; Lincoln ranked 14th nationally in per capita refugee resettlement in the 2000 census. Here and across the nation, more and more households are becoming what the US Census Bureau describes as “linguistically isolated”. The Hispanic American Center for Economic Research states, “about 11.9 million people lived in linguistically isolated homes [in 2000], meaning nobody in the home 14 or older knew English ‘very well.’ That was up 54 percent from 1990” (Appendix page 10).

This need for improved access extends beyond households defined as linguistically isolated. In the healthcare arena, many physicians and LEP patients rely heavily upon bilingual family members—oftentimes young children—to interpret critical health information. For example, a Bosnian refugee with ovarian cancer may have a fourteen-year-old son with moderate English proficiency; her household would therefore not be defined as linguistically isolated. Yet her son's vocabulary and emotional maturity make him a less than ideal candidate to interpret critical information concerning his mother's prognosis and treatment.

There are not enough qualified interpreters and translators in Lincoln to independently satisfy the needs of non-English speakers. Lincoln, Nebraska, needs replicable programming that increases the number of well-trained interpreters and translators in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. (Appendix pages 12-14 contain portions of *An Assessment of the Safety Net in Lincoln, Nebraska*. George Washington University's measurement of local healthcare capacities documents needs in these five languages.) But unless the goal is to place a qualified translator or interpreter in every target language on every corner, an innovative project must do more than turn out additional translators and interpreters. It must create job opportunities, foster employability and encourage entrepreneurship. It must help them to become technologically capable businesspeople. It must also enhance the ability of these qualified interpreters and translators to succeed by connecting them with the many employers who struggle to serve LEP clients.

b. A Solution of Connections

The answer to the problem of inadequate access for patients and clients with Limited English Proficiency lies in connecting them with trained interpreters and translators. Networked Interpreter Translator Enterprises will:

- Identify through community-wide referrals 140 bilingual people with the desire to pursue careers in interpretation and translation
- Give these candidates the language and technology training they need to become successful interpreters and translators
- Connect trained candidates to potential employers all over the country through video remote interpreting and internet access

- Foster entrepreneurship and job creation among interpreters and translators through microenterprise education and assistance

Lincoln Action Program's own Computer Learning Lab, and our partnership with Southeast Community College will provide technology training. Our Microenterprise Program will add entrepreneurial education and assistance to help participants to succeed. The innovative use of connective technologies like video relay systems and web portals will extend the reach of NITE beyond Lincoln, making benefits available around the country. NITE's video remote interpreting will have a marked impact for rural health providers who find themselves far removed geographically from the interpreter/translator resources more urban areas enjoy.

This increased reach will address a local and national shortage of well-trained interpreters and translators. It will also help to ensure the success of new translating and interpreting businesses by greatly expanding the client-base with which entrepreneurs can contract work. These contracting agencies will also benefit greatly; by adapting to better serve growing LEP populations, these agencies will expand their client and customer base.

c. Outcomes and Outputs for Project Participants and Non-English Speakers
Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises *Outcomes* include the following:

- Clinics, businesses, schools and community centers will better serve those with Limited English Proficiency through improved technology infrastructure
- Lincoln's interpreters and translators will grow in number and gain in qualifications
- New interpreter/translator businesses will have enhanced capacities to meet a unique, national need and succeed in a competitive marketplace

NITE *Outputs* include:

- One hundred-forty (140) participants with interests in interpretation and/or translation will receive language and technology training and business assistance
- Forty (40) new interpreter/translator businesses will capitalize on equipment, training, and business assistance including e-marketing and web development
- All 140 participants will have access to video relay technology and other computer applications to connect to a broader base of potential employers, thereby addressing a nationwide need for interpreters and translators

II. Innovation: What Sets NITE Apart?

Though Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises will use emerging video relay technologies in its services, the heart of what is innovative about this project isn't its technology applications. Other TOP projects, including programming at Eastern Kentucky University and Metropolitan Hospital in Michigan, have also put video remote interpretation to good use. But this project moves beyond establishing systems for a single need and prioritizes building a healthy workforce of independent interpreters and translators.

Lincoln Action Program has learned from and built advancements upon these pioneering projects. Like the "Crossing the Communication Divide" project in Grand Rapids,

Michigan, NITE creates a centralized interpreter bank. Yet NITE's reach is extended. It incorporates translator training as well as interpreter training, and it fosters entrepreneurship among its participants. Therefore, translators and interpreters working within the central hub are not limited to addressing the needs of one agency or a small consortium of partners; rather, they can contract with any business, clinic, school or agency in the nation. The project's entrepreneurs will not only have their own computer, they will also distribute \$10,000 worth of donated computers equipped for video remote interpreting as incentive for agencies to contract with them for their interpretation needs.

This emphasis on job creation, entrepreneurship and versatility is also what sets our project apart from the Kentucky Deaf Access Consortium (K-DAC). Where K-DAC focused on connecting the state's American Sign Language users, NITE will support interpreters and translators in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. This program will not only improve access for the region's non-English speakers; it will also provide national opportunities and foster success for the interpreters and translators who help them.

III. Community Involvement

a. Invested Partnerships

The success of Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises relies heavily on the strengths of its partnerships. Lincoln Action Program enjoys strong bonds with several effective service partners. A few of these partnerships are outlined below.

Southeast Community College (SCC)—Through a concurrent project partnership with Lincoln Action Program, SCC is offering four interpretation courses; the central course in this series is *Ethics and Responsibilities in Language Interpreting*. The three additional courses offer specialized interpreter training in education, medicine, law enforcement and human services. With \$10,000 through this grant, SCC will develop a curriculum for a training and ethics course in translation. Their letter of commitment may be found on page 18.

Heartland Health Alliance—This continuum of 30 regional hospitals is dedicated to improving healthcare for the Midwest's growing number of non-English speakers. Member hospitals with identified interpretive and translatorial need will invest in the technologies necessary to connect with NITE's independent interpreter-translator contractors. Their letter of commitment for this project may be found on Appendix 20.

Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund—This group recognizes the need to support programs that serve Nebraska's small and micro businesses. It is their mission to mobilize, allocate, leverage and link strategic local, state and national resources with community-based organizations that provide financial and technical assistance to Nebraska's businesses. The Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund will provide support for Lincoln Action Program as we provide training and technical assistance to these entrepreneurs. Their letter of support for this project may be found on Appendix 27.

Clinic With a Heart—The Clinic operates once a month onsite at Lincoln Action Program to provide free medical care to uninsured low-income families and non-English speakers. Non-English speaking patients may make appointments prior to their visit and the Clinic will provide an interpreter. The Clinic With a Heart is dedicated to utilizing translators and interpreters from Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises to improve their care to non-English speakers. Their letter of support committing in-kind resources for this project is on Appendix 19.

Center for People in Need—This new social service agency in Lincoln is dedicated to supporting low-income families as they work to gain self-sufficiency. Their “Truckloads of Help” project warehouses millions of dollars worth of surplus office furniture, equipment, supplies and personal goods, which they distribute to low-income families and their service providers. They are dedicating over \$160,000 worth of these items to equip the interpreting and translating businesses of NITE participants. Their letter of commitment is on page 17.

b. Support for End Users

The unique structure of Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises allows for three distinct groups of end users: participating interpreters and translators, contracting agencies expanding their multilingual services, and non-English speakers in their efforts to access services and information. The supports in place for these three groups are outlined below.

NITE Supports for Interpreters and Translators—

- Language and technology training specific to interpretation and translation on campus at Southeast Community College and onsite at Lincoln Action Program
- Microenterprise assistance to help entrepreneurial participants get their language-service businesses off the ground
- Access to technology and video remote interpreting system to foster connections to more contracting agencies
- Information and Referral to other services that can advance their careers and help them attain self-sufficiency
- Lincoln Action Program’s nationally reputable Case Management services

NITE Supports for Contracting Agencies—

- Technical support for employers wishing to connect with participant interpreters and translators via technologies such as video relay systems
- Access to a body of interpreters and translators in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese
- Customized employee technology training in our Computer Learning Lab
- Access to employer resources like diversity training

NITE Supports for Non-English Speakers—

- Improved interpretive and translatorial services in an increasing number of clinics, schools, agencies and businesses

- Information and Referral to linguistically appropriate and culturally competent services to help LEP families progress toward self-sufficiency
- Lincoln Action Program's nationally reputable Case Management services
- Multilingual technology training in our Computer Learning Lab, credits from which can earn students a free, internet-ready computer
- Free culturally competent medical care at the Clinic With a Heart
- Translated material online through Internet Language Access program

The following hypothetical example outlines how each of the three end user groups may interact with the system in a given case. Mr. Novakovich is an elderly Bosnian refugee with Limited English Proficiency. He is in need of physical therapy at Memorial Hospital in Hastings, Nebraska, for a replaced hip. Memorial Hospital reaches the interpreter hub through Lincoln Action Program and contracts Ms. Kapetonovic, a Bosnian interpreter who has recently completed training at Southeast Community College. She interprets for Mr. Novakovich and his physical therapist through a video remote interpretation system and clarifies aspects of his therapy regimen. During their interaction, she learns of Mr. Novakovich's growing food needs and refers him to Lincoln Action Program's Perishable Foods Program, where he receives food and holistic case management. Memorial Hospital is interested in having more of its therapists trained on the video remote interpretation system and expanding its base of materials translated in Spanish and Bosnian. Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises helps Memorial Hospital in both regards. With the training and experience Ms. Kapetonovic gained through the NITE project, she lands larger interpreting contracts via video remote interpretation with hospitals in St. Paul and Atlanta.

c. Stakeholder Involvement

Section III a. "Invested Partners," describes the community-wide involvement in Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises' design. Lincoln Action Program prioritizes input from low-income stakeholders in all of its services. One third of our 21-member Board of Directors is comprised of representatives elected by the low-income community we serve. We also conduct an Annual Low-Income Needs Survey that informs us as we adapt our programming to the changing needs of the low-income community. Our 2003 survey reveals a record level of reported need in developing English proficiency.

We also learn much from the people we work with every day in the fields of microenterprise assistance and refugee services. Our Refugee Individual Development Account initiative has leveraged the savings of many Lincoln refugees and helped them to purchase over \$1,100,000 worth of assets including automobiles and homes. And our Microenterprise Program has helped start more than 200 small businesses since its inception in 1995. Our presence in these areas revealed the need that NITE proposes to address. Lincoln Action Program prides itself on our ability to recognize and respond to changing needs.

d. Demonstrating Sustained Commitment

Lincoln Action Program's success over our 40-year history of service to low-income families is the direct result of our strong emphasis in sustaining important programming. Our success also speaks to the strengths of our partnerships; no nonprofit organization can prosper in isolation. Lincoln Action Program enjoys consistent support from many of the same partners working to make Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises a reality. Southeast Community College is a leading partner in a related project through the Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals (JOLI) program. The New Americans Task Force, the Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund and others are also groups whose commitment to our work has spanned many projects. The independent evaluator for this project, the Center for Children, Families and the Law, has been an effective and informative evaluator for a number of Lincoln Action Program projects.

These long-term, multi-project partnerships reflect a commitment to sustain effective programming in our community. Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises is one such program that will thrive thanks to dedicated partners and positive results for our community.

IV. Evaluating the Success of Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises
Evaluation Strategy and Questions—The University of Nebraska's Center for Children, Families and the Law will serve as the independent evaluator for NITE. Surveys will be distributed to all three end user groups. A draft of such a survey for the interpreter-translator end group may be found on Appendix page 29. Intensive data collection through Service Point will document the level of success we attain toward the stated outputs and outcomes. Service Point is a new database that the city of Lincoln will use to track social services across our community. Lincoln Action Program is one of a few pilot agencies testing Service Point in its initial year. We will use Service Point to track data for NITE. The Center for Children, Families and the Law is providing technical assistance with Service Point. (Their letter of commitment is on page 21. The lead researcher's vita follows on pages 22 and 23.)

Collected data and completed surveys will answer questions about the willingness of local clinics, businesses and agencies to improve their services to reach clients, patients and customers with Limited English Proficiency. They will also help us determine the receptivity of the marketplace to new entrepreneurial interpreters and translators. Also, we will note the extent to which access to services is improving for non-English speakers in our community.

Data Collection and Analysis Plans—We will collect both qualitative and quantitative data measures to gauge the success of NITE. Quantitative measures include:

- Number of participating interpreters and translators in Arabic, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese (tracked throughout)
- Number of interpreter/translator businesses that succeed in attaining customers outside the state of Nebraska
- Number of language, business and technology courses completed at Lincoln Action Program and Southeast Community College (tracked quarterly)
- Number of interpreter/translator businesses started (tracked throughout)

- Number of interpreter/translator businesses still in operation at program end
- Number of contracting agencies seeking translatorial and/or interpretive assistance (tracked throughout)

Qualitative measures include:

- Improved interpretive and translatorial performance (tracked through quarterly pre- and post-test assessments in training courses)
- Improved services targeted to non-English speakers at contracting agencies (tracked through annual contracting agency surveys)
- Heightened access among non-English speakers in the targeted language groups (tracked through annual non-English speaker surveys)
- Ability of other service agencies to replicate NITE programming

Upon notice of funding, Lincoln Action Program and the Center for Children, Families and the Law will further formalize the evaluation plan.

Funds for Evaluation—Breakdowns for the \$110,000 allocated for evaluation expenses are outlined in the contractual section of the budget narrative on pages 37 and 38.

Evaluators—Internal evaluation tasks will be the responsibility of Community Services Director, Nicole Nuss and TOP Administrator, Matt Platte. They will oversee data collection and surveys for all three end user groups. Ms. Nuss has an MBA from Southern Illinois University and an MSW from Washington University in St. Louis. She has directed LAP's Community Services Division for three years. Mr. Platte is very familiar with the data collection and evaluation elements required through the Technology Opportunities Program. He is currently administering Lincoln Action Program's second successful TOP program.

University of Nebraska Lincoln's Jeff Chambers will serve as the independent evaluator for Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises. His vita can be found on pages 22 and 23. They have served as third-party evaluators for several nonprofit grant studies, including many at Lincoln Action Program. They are professional, concise and independent.

Final Evaluation Report—University of Nebraska Lincoln's Jeff Chambers, as independent evaluator for NITE, will conduct the comprehensive final evaluation report.

V. Project Feasibility

a. NITE's Technical Approach: Four Important Questions

How will NITE's technology operate with other systems?

Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises will provide its entrepreneurs with 140 computers equipped with a webcam and video remote interpreting software. Lincoln Action Program's own Computer Learning Lab will also have three machines equipped with the same cameras and technology. NITE does not stop here; to ensure that contracting businesses, clinics and service agencies can connect with the project's entrepreneurs, NITE will also provide participants with 100 additional donated computers

and webcams. Project entrepreneurs will distribute these additional machines to contractors as incentives for agencies to do business with them.

Why is video remote interpretation better than the alternatives?

Video remote interpretation systems over high-speed connections enable more complete interpretation than simple phone-based systems; video relay technology allows for body language and gestured messaging. Take for example the scenario outlined on pages four and five with Mr. Novakovich and his physical therapist. Video remote interpretation enables the interpreter to match the spoken word with gestures that clarify his therapy exercises. This added level of interpretation matched with the ability to reach contracting agencies all over the country make video remote interpretation technology the best choice for NITE. The same is true for translators; computer-generated translations are frankly unreliable.

How will the system be maintained and upgraded?

Thanks to Lincoln Action Program's existing Computer Learning Lab (which served over 1,200 duplicated clients last year), our staff has the capacity to maintain a breadth of technologies. The Computer Learning Lab offers courses in all of NITE's target languages as well as in American Sign and Persian; we are accustomed to providing technical support in many languages. Donations and foundation support also ensure regular upgrades.

How will it grow in the future?

Plans for future growth involve expanding the number of interpretive and translatorial small businesses and adopting an international scope. Translators and interpreters could serve businesses in their native countries wishing to reach English-speaking clientele.

b. Lincoln Action Program's Qualifications

Lincoln Action Program is a leader in using technology to advance the lives and opportunities of low-income families. Low-income clients logged more than 21,200 hours in our Computer Learning Lab last year. There, they learned computer skills that build employability in our economy. Our staff of 150 also has built a strong reputation through implementing two previous successful TOP programs: Operation: Job Support, and Internet Language Access. We also have a strong history in supporting the small business goals of low-income clients, with a specific emphasis on refugee entrepreneurs. We've helped start hundreds of businesses from restaurants and delis to janitorial services and culturally centered childcare. Since 2000, 86 refugees have opened Individual Development Accounts to leverage savings in pursuit of business goals. Over \$1,100,000 in assets have been purchased through this project. These successes prove that Lincoln Action Program is qualified to run Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises.

c. Implementing and Completing NITE

Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises will run for 36 months, beginning on October 1, 2004, and ending on September 30, 2007. Please refer to Appendix page 30 for a timeline of major project milestones.

d. Privacy and Security

Like any successful social service provider, Lincoln Action Program takes seriously issues of client confidentiality. Southeast Community College's *Ethics and Responsibilities in Language Interpreting* course will address confidentiality issues with NITE participants as they conduct their businesses. The translation curriculum to be developed through this project will do the same for translators. Our business assistance services will also stress privacy issues.

e. Sustainability

As stated in Part III, Section d. "Demonstrating Sustained Commitment," Lincoln Action Program's success is rooted in its emphasis on sustaining effective programming that addresses the needs of low-income families in our community. Multi-project partnerships and a diverse funding base have enabled Lincoln Action Program to grow as a Community Action Agency with over \$12.9 million in annual revenue.

Current agency-wide sustainability efforts are expanding community investment and corporate support. These non-federal sources will be integral in sustaining NITE beyond its initial project period. Once entrepreneurs have achieved success and are running self-sufficient businesses after the three-year project period, Lincoln Action Program may charge non-low-income participants for access to the technology hub. These funds would also help sustain the project. Fees for technical support and training to contracting agency end users may also generate sustaining funds after the project period. (It should be noted that Lincoln Action Program does not charge low-income clients for any of its many services.)

f. Dissemination

Lincoln Action Program is renowned for its effective services. Dozens of social service agencies around the nation have adopted the case management model developed here. We are also well connected with other Community Action Agencies around the country. This status puts us in a wonderful position to share lessons and best practices generated from Networked Interpreter-Translator Enterprises. Our project administrator and other team leaders will share lessons learned with their colleagues at conferences and symposia, as well as on our website. The interpreter/translator businesses we help will also place links to this information on their websites.